

*Sunday 4th December 2022*

*Reading 1, Isaiah 11:1-10; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 71:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Reading 2, Romans 15: 4-9; Gospel, Matthew 3:1-12*

As you settle to reflect on this Gospel of John preaching in the wilderness, take a few moments to imagine the scene. Picture John the Baptist, look at his clothes, his face, his demeanour. Look around you at the scene. How do you imagine the wilderness? See John baptising others in the Jordan. And now hear his voice as he has important things to say. A reflection I read recently helped me understand John is pointing people to the coming of Jesus in three ways in this passage.

He was pointing people not to Jesus' birth, because Jesus is already an adult man at this time. He's pointing people to the coming of Jesus as the suffering servant, the ministering Messiah, the compassionate Christ. Something special is about to happen.

Secondly, he called people to repentance. His first word is 'Repent.' When he addresses the Pharisees and Sadducees, he makes it clear repentance is about showing a change of heart and mind in the way each one lives their life. He says, 'Produce fruit consistent with repentance.' What might you need to repent of this Advent in order to live a fruitful and faith filled life?

Thirdly, he draws attention to the work of Jesus. 'He will baptise with the Holy Spirit,' he says. The Holy Spirit brings real change to the heart. How might you let your heart be changed this Advent? How do you desire the Holy Spirit to blow through the ordinary actions of each day and transform each day into a blessing for yourself and those around you? What graces might you want to ask for in these Advent days so your heart is truly prepared for the coming of the Messiah who brings transformation, peace, compassion, justice, generosity? Let's greet this Jesus with open hearts and minds. Let him in.

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